Border Security - CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS)

Duration: 3 years (commenced January 2016)

Overview

CARICOM IMPACS is the implementation arm for crime and security for CARICOM, responsible to action CARICOM's Crime and Security Strategy on behalf of member states.

The common security risks and threats in the region have been prioritized in the Crime and Security Strategy. The relationship between transnational organised crime's trade in illicit commodities of drugs and guns and their primary facilitators of corruption and gangs has been identified as greatest of these threats. Increasing trans-border intelligence/information sharing and strengthening CARICOM borders are critical to mitigating these risks. Additionally, it is important that Member States strengthen the effectiveness of criminal investigations using modern technologies and scientific techniques.

IMPACS plays a critical role in securing the Region's borders through its sub-agency, the Joint Regional Communications Centre (JRCC). The JRCC is responsible for the pre-screening of passengers from air and sea carriers through its central hub, the Advance Passenger Information System (APIS). This system is currently operational in 10 Member States and there are plans to extend it to three (3) other countries, as well as all the Immigration, Customs and specialist units within CARICOM member states. The inclusion of these units in the APIS programme will enhance the Watch Listing, Analytical and Enforcement functions of the programme.

In order to further strengthen border intelligence and information sharing, CARICOM IMPACS intends to facilitate the establishment of an Advanced Cargo Information System (ACIS) in at least thirteen (13) Member States. This system will share cargo information received at a central portal located at the JRCC directly from freight forwarders and shippers. This information will be analysed and scrubbed against intelligence databases (similar to that of APIS) and provide critical advanced information about high risk cargo to the relevant national Customs Authorities. Further, ACIS will allow for the centralized screening of all cargo manifests and the standardization and harmonization of all cargo information. This system will work in conjunction with the already existing national customs systems in the relevant member states, but will now include a regional risk assessment element and a link to the APIS system to allow for the integration of cargo and passenger data, where such linkage is possible.

Training border security officials is necessary to improve border security controls; thus, there will be joint training of customs and immigration officials at both the national and regional levels.

Strengthening the intelligence arm of the region's crime and security architecture is instrumental to crime detection. This will be done through training programmes designed to standardize and improve information and intelligence reporting and collection at the national and regional levels as well as to enhance trend analysis and strategic intelligence capability. This training will enable the region’s intelligence practitioners to deliver timely, accurate, and high quality intelligence products.

With enhanced systems at the borders, it is likely that there will be greater detection of crimes. It is therefore essential to have systems in place to prosecute and convict perpetrators. One aspect of this is the role of firearms examiners and ballistic experts in producing the necessary evidence to

ensure conviction. The project will establish a regional training and certification programme in ballistic examinations, which will improve the capacity of Member States to examine ballistic evidence and present it in court.

Expected results/outcomes

- Expansion of the Advanced Passenger information System (APIS) to 3 additional Immigration Departments and 12 Customs Departments in CARICOM Member States
- Establishment of the Advanced Cargo Information System in all ASYCUDA Customs systems in CARICOM Member States
- Enhanced capacity of Border Security Officials to prevent, detect and minimize the opportunities for illegal activity at the borders
- Development of the capacity of Border Security Officials to train other officials
- Establishment of Regional Training and Certification Programmes for Ballistic Experts and Firearms Examiners